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SUBJECT: UN REFORM: SECRETARY-GENERAL SEEKS WEOG SUPPORT  
FOR MANAGEMENT REFORMS

REF: A. USUN 0442

[1](#)B. USUN 0461

[1](#)1. In a briefing March 10 to ambassadors from the Western Europe and Other Group (WEOG), Secretary-General Kofi Annan said that the Summit initiative by world leaders last September had provided an unprecedented opportunity to push forward a comprehensive proposal for reforming UN management. He said the proposal, contained in "Investing in the United Nations: for a stronger Organization worldwide" (reftels), is a strategic one that provides broad direction over 3 to 5 years. Some initiatives are simple and can be done quickly, for example the creation of a Chief Information Officer and the granting of authority to perform cost-benefit analyses of certain functions. He said he would soon provide a list of quick possibilities. Annan also said that recent debates on other issues had been difficult and divisive for Member States, but UN management reform would benefit all. He also indicated that if Member States could agree to create the new Human Rights Council next week, this would provide momentum for a concentrated effort on management reform. He further stated (with a bit of a smile) that once management reform is dealt with, perhaps Security Council reform could be next. Annan's briefing to WEOG was one of five given during the week to the UN's regional groupings.

[1](#)2. Representatives of WEOG member states were generally supportive of the Secretary-General's proposal. Following is a sampling of the comments.

-- The Austrian Ambassador, speaking for the European Union, thanked the Secretary-General for starting the dialogue for reform with an approach that was not "business as usual." He said that the EU would need to study the proposals carefully and consider them under the guidance of the President of the General Assembly.

-- The British Ambassador remarked it was important to proceed quickly with some early wins, given the "needs of the May-June" timeframe. He also said that the recent action by the UN Staff Council to vote no confidence in the Secretary-General was an "irresponsible act."

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-- The Germany Ambassador said some of the Secretary-General's proposals were revolutionary and likened

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them to proposals that he himself pursued in the German Foreign Ministry a while ago. Like in Germany, the employees that might be affected by the changes were worried about their jobs; it was important to continue dialogues with staff and other stakeholders to convince them of the need for reform.

-- The Dutch Ambassador said he was firmly behind the Secretary-General in his effort to reform the UN. He

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referred to a lack of trust that the Secretariat faced with UN staff members as well as member states and also asked about the savings that would be achieved through the investment in reforms.

-- The Ambassador from Iceland said he would read the report over the weekend. He also asked whether the UN was getting the best people for the jobs through the current examination and recruitment process.

-- The Spanish Ambassador said it was important to make sure that the soul of the Organization, including its commitment to multilingualism, was not lost through the reform process.

-- The Australian Ambassador thanked the Secretary-General for the "high strategic report", comparing the current UN reform effort to the one started by the Australian Foreign Ministry a few years ago. As results became evident, the opposition to the changes was reduced.

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